

**Commemorative address by Rev. Nichiko Niwano,
President of the Niwano Peace Foundation**

Today, on the occasion of the award ceremony for the 25th Niwano Peace Prize, we are extremely grateful to all of you who have gathered here to celebrate this event with us, especially (give the names of the important guests).

This year, the Niwano Peace Prize is being awarded to H.R.H. Prince El Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which is a cause of great joy for the Niwano Peace Foundation.

Currently, I am actively participating in the WCRP (World Conference of Religions for Peace), an organization formed of religious leaders from the world's various religions, and I serve as one of its Co-Presidents. H.R.H. Prince Hassan had served as Moderator of the WCRP for seven years until August 2006. That is why this time, not only do I have a sense of deep respect for the recipient of the prize; I also have a special feeling of closeness and affinity.

The holding of the WCRP's World Assemblies has so far taken place eight times. In 1994, the 7th World Conference was held in Amman, Jordan. That was the first time that it had ever been held in a Muslim country. At that time, H.R.H. Prince Hassan gave his full cooperation to the almost 1,000 participants from various religions, and led the conference to great success. He then went on to accept the post of Moderator of the WCRP, since which time, up until the holding of the 8th World Assembly in Kyoto, he led the WCRP forward.

As Moderator, H.R.H. Prince Hassan actively promoted interfaith dialogue, and persuaded everyone of the importance of "actions that have a fruitful effect." At present, the WCRP is conducting many projects related to the conflicts and other issues that are taking place around the world, and it is greatly because of the excellent leadership of H.R.H. Prince Hassan that we have been able to strive toward becoming "a WCRP that takes action."

In addition, despite the fact that His Highness of course enjoys a certain status, his frank openness and willingness to interact closely with everyone have impressed the members of the WCRP as a true model to be emulated.

As mentioned earlier, H.R.H. Prince Hassan is deeply involved with several issues, including peacemaking among conflicting parties, the protection of human rights, the reduction of armed forces, and the protection of the environment, and serves in important positions in several international organizations. His enormous stamina for action, spirituality, and personality have inspired tremendous trust among the peoples of the world.

Above all, in whatever activity that H.R.H. Prince Hassan becomes involved, he first and foremost protects the concept of “the dignity of life” with all his heart. Furthermore, he strongly believes that such reverence needs to be universal and guaranteed with equality for all.

“The dignity of life” is a topic that has been discussed on many occasions, so everyone may share an understanding of it. The desire to protect one’s family is common to all humanity. In the same way, most people also have very strong feelings for the dignity of their ethnic group and of their nation.

However, once the concern for dignity of life is directed toward “others,” “other people,” and “other nations,” the consciousness of people suddenly becomes dull. In particular, it should be noted that, from the development of history and the ulterior motives of politics, a viewpoint of opposition is established, and the world becomes a place in which “the dignity of life” is characterized by inequality, which gives rise to disparities.

In the midst of this, based upon his deep and abiding faith in the teachings of Islam, H.R.H. Prince Hassan exhibits the kind of leadership that cherishes “the dignity of life” of others and also continuously works toward resolving conflicts in this world in which conflicts and division persist. Through his stance and his activities, he is a shining example of the Islamic teaching that says: “Before God, there is no such concept as people, nationality, occupation, or gender—all are unconditionally equal.”

The more devoted people of religion are to their beliefs, the less tolerant they tend to become of other religions and often take mistaken views that causing further opposition. However, if we examine the true nature of faith, we will eventually be led to the truth that is universal to all.

India’s Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have said: “God is not Truth; Truth is God.”

Even though each religion has its own explanations, fundamentally, they all express the same, universal truth, and it is from perceiving this universal truth and sharing it that true and unconditional love and compassion toward all living beings are born.

The reason for this is that, in a real sense, when we “take refuge” in something, there is no longer any sense of opposition. I believe that people of religion will naturally become as one, with hearts and stances that “take refuge” in Truth.

When one is devoted to one’s own faith, one can only, as a person of religion, become tolerant of others—and H.R.H. Prince Hassan is himself living proof of this.

In the Lotus Sutra, a Buddhist scripture, this line appears: “Remain unsoiled in this world, like a lotus in muddy water.”

The significance of this line is that, just like a lotus that blossoms in the midst of muddy water, without being soiled at all by the mud, you, too, can remain pure and unsoiled while living in this world of pollution.

Within the world, there are various concepts of values, as well as many different views on political, economic, and historical aspects, which differ greatly according to country or region. Even while living in the reality of such a world, is it not the fundamental stance of people of religion to strive after remaining unsoiled by the diverse concepts of values and to persist in the search for a truth that is fair for all? Here, I would like to express my deepest respect for and admiration of H.R.H. Prince Hassan for himself being such a paragon of this stance.

In 2006, at the 8th World Assembly of the WCRP in Kyoto, H.R.H. Prince Hassan delivered these words:

“Humanity must make a shift from being merely joined together on the Internet, to coming to join our hearts in a kind of Innernet.”

“We must come to support ‘pluralism,’ act with the spirit of humility, and come to think of others as above us. Above all else, we must think from the others’ points of view.”

I hope that this valuable suggestion will also be deeply engraved in the hearts of all of you.

In a world in which the roots of a self-centered sense of values remain with nations, people, societies, and individuals, the expectations placed upon H.R.H. Prince Hassan can only become greater.

It is hoped that, based upon the momentum generated by this award ceremony, many people will come to share the aspirations and activities of H.R.H. Prince Hassan. It is also my fervent prayer that His Highness will enjoy good health and continue his activities on an even deeper level.

Thank you very much.